



## **Indigenization for Restoration of Ethiopianism**

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### **Abstract**

The main issue that this paper focused on is the restoration of Ethiopianism through indigenization of our system of education. One of the great mistakes done by the successive regime in Ethiopia is the role they played in modernizing the system of education without considering the indigenous knowledge system. In the modernization process, they completely dismantled the indigenous system of knowledge from the school curriculum. The proper Ethiopian knowledge which Ethiopianism was built such as the cultural, Economic and social factors are marginalized. The Ethiopian 'self' those elements which the Ethiopians experienced in their culture, history, politics and communal life is gradually deteriorating. Their system of knowledge on which they started civilization and contributed to the world currently considered as traditional, inferior, superstitious, primitive and so on. Ethiopians are "the first civilized inhabitants of the Nile and Tigris, Euphrates valleys, where a dark-skinned people with short hair and prominent lips; and that they are referred to by some scholars as Cushites (Ethiopians), and as Hamites by others" were the source of civilization began but these civilized people who remain uncolonized currently colonized in the system of education and politics. These people are going back from the line of civilization to ethnic conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This paper, therefore, discusses the need for indigenization in restoring Ethiopianism that is deteriorating on the bases of historical perspective and practical observation.

**Keywords:** indigenization, Ethiopianism, indigenous knowledge, Ethiopia, restoration

### **Introduction**

Indigenization is crucial in building up knowledge relevant to the local context that is inherited from the past and the legacies of different cultures in the communities and histories. It enables the population to lead a life that is harmonious with their fellow citizens and that of the natural environment. Ethiopianism is one of the legacies of the past generation which the present has to inherit.

Ethiopia is one of the world's oldest independent nation, its territorial size has varied over the millennia of its survival due to the European sabotage.

As archaeological evidence have found Ethiopia is the home of the oldest known human ancestors, including *Ardipithecus ramidus kadabba* (c.5.8–5.2 million years old) and *Australopithecus anamensis* (c. 4.2 million years old). This revealed that the center of world civilization is in Ethiopia.

Among various historical facts that make Ethiopia prominent in modern world affairs and became examples for the other black nation under colony is the battle of Adwa in 1896. In this battle Ethiopia defeated the Italian force who were mechanized with the latest modern weaponry by fighters who were typically using spears as their main weapons and some out dated rifles. Ethiopia was among the first independent nation who was the member of the League of Nations and also to sign the Charter of the United Nations.

During colonialism Ethiopia played a prominent role in providing military training, moral, diplomatic and Material support for those countries under colonial power. In the establishment of the Organization of African Unity and the

growth of Pan-Africanism, the Ethiopian leaders played a leading role. Hence, in order to pass this legacy to the new generation indigenization is important. It is only when we indigenize our school curriculum that we know ourselves. This article, therefore, discusses the need for indigenization for restoration of Ethiopianism which is gradually deteriorating from time to time especially during the present generation.

### **Indigenization for restoration of Ethiopianism**

Promoting Indigenous Ethiopian knowledge is a key to success for the implementation of the principles of Ethiopianism. The generation, adoption, and use of indigenous knowledge are greatly influenced by the culture. The past and present Economic, social, political and geographical contexts also contribute in creating the spirit of Ethiopianism. Ethiopianism is residing in our past and present experiences. The new generation has to know the history and experiences of the past generation. This is possible when there is an interface between diverse participants such as family, community, school, and government that will facilitate the teaching of indigenous knowledge to promote Ethiopianism. Especially the teaching of elders who knows the past is important to transmit knowledge to the present. This knowledge is found in Ethiopian history, proverbs, poems, and artefacts. It is found in the struggle of Adewa, Mekedela and in all parts of the country's history and in all other achievements. The basis of Ethiopianism also found in all our institutions, including the church and Mosques history. Ethiopianism is found in the history of the Ethiopian leaders

who in one way or another contributed to Ethiopia exist as a nation. It is found in the contribution of individual's heroes and heroines who sacrifice themselves for their mother land and presence of Ethiopians on the map. Ethiopianism is shown in the unique language which has its own script and makes the Ethiopians unique from the rest of the world. Ethiopianism existed in the indigenous education which currently marginalized by Eurocentric education.

Equipping with Indigenous knowledge becomes a means of resistance to the imported colonial and imperial domination of knowledge and the impact of money politics which currently degrading Ethiopians existence. Today Ethiopia is immersed in ethnic conflict sponsored by money politics. This is largely the fault of the generation, which shows Ethiopians are in difficulty of defending their country from disintegration. The country and the principles that our ancestors passed to this generation and what we will pass to the next generation is quite different. The successors of this generation are going to face a lot of problems. The past successive generation lives with freedom when the other African countries were under colony. It is because of the sacrifice the forefather and mother paid, their unity, the integrity, and principle that they were directed for the sovereignty of Ethiopia as a country. An obvious strong reminder to Ethiopians not to lose their historical legacies. The present generation should learn from their historical heritages while enhancing them within the school system and other networks of determining historical restorations. This is possible by indigenizing our school curriculum. The education goal of Ethiopia should be on virtue training and building Ethiopianism character as the most salient goal.

Ethiopia a country who is independent for centuries has her own language having its own script, but currently, the present generation gives value to western language than indigenous language. The Ethiopian education system gives priority to foreign language English than indigenous language. The country which remains independent is colonized through the education system.

The Western language was systematized as an expression of views, philosophies, and thoughts to refute African peoples the right to explain and express themselves and their approaches in their own language (Ntuli 2002:53). Like the Ethiopian education system, the present generation gives values to the Western language, especially English than the indigenous one. Speaking English or mixing with indigenous language while speaking is a common trend in the country. Foreign language marginalized the indigenous one. It is obvious that speaking one international language is important to communicate with others and gain knowledge of the rest of the world. But giving priority to a foreign language is surrendering oneself to foreign values and culture is colonization.

Languages in schools, colleges, and African universities are key to the success of a decolonized, inclusive education for all learners. Language is about the culture and identity as well as enhancing the self and collective esteem of African learners. Indigenous languages also become a site of resistance to the dominance of the colonial/imperial language, English. It is through

language that African culture is learned and transmitted. There must be a family/community and school interface that will facilitate the introduction of local/indigenous knowledge in schools to create learning sites of different and multiple knowledge (Dei 2014:168) <sup>[3]</sup>.

One of the crises in Ethiopia history is the successive education history of the country. The country which has the history of more than 3000 years, independent and never colonized by the West, the education system is colonized, which leads to the colonization of the mind of Ethiopian to surrender them to a foreign culture which gradually leads to the weakening of Ethiopianism and its principles. In order for the education to accomplish its purpose, it has to give concern for the culture of the society in which it operated and from which it originated. Among this culture, Ethiopianism is one and the main. In this culture, the principle and values embodied which the present generation to some extent inherited from the past generation's such as: patriotism, honesty, self-confident, nationalism, concern for others are gradually failing. This can be restructured and decolonized by integrating indigenous knowledge in the existing school curriculum. This indigenous knowledge includes Ethiopianism, and its principles.

Education plays a great part in the socialization of children to inherit the values and history of the society. The school has the obligation to teach children Ethiopianism culture and principle to be productive in the development of the country and to keep the country's leading role in the struggle against colonialism and inequality. For the young generation to be an archetype as of his/her forefather in current order of the world, the school curriculum has to be modified in teaching Ethiopian history using indigenous language. Schools bear most of the responsibility for preparing young people to be the productive member and build a sense of ownership.

In the current school curriculum, indigenous knowledge is marginalized and there is a need for demarginalization of Indigenous knowledge in the teaching of Ethiopianism to the new generation. In the present world School is the key for children to acquire the basic expertise that makes them inherit the heritage of the society which maintains the independence of the country for long periods. The education that children learn from school, both negatively and positively has an impression on their future life. To have the positive impact they have to know the country's history. To know the country's history, indigenous knowledge has to be integrated into the curriculum students are shaping.

Ethiopia is a country with many cultural groups. From these cultural groups, lots of life lessons can be learned. There is no need for the country to implement western democracy, before western democracy, there are democratic principles which are practiced by the Oromo people in Ethiopia "*Gedda*". *Gedda* is the system in which power is transferred from one to another democratically. Through the indigenous knowledge of the *Gedda* system that in the Oromo society of Ethiopia resources are well-kept and managed. *Gedda* is a cultural structure and an indigenous democratic system of the Oromo society of Ethiopia that they are electing leaders of the community (Tenna 2000:586). The election of the *Gedda* leaders in the Oromo society of Ethiopia is the concern of each individual

member of the community (Asmarom 1973:202)<sup>[1]</sup>. Haile Gebriel (2007) said, they are the indigenous knowledge student who at the time of Ethio-Italy war, defeated the well-equipped West power of the time. According to Haile Gabriel, the reason was that the students of the time learn from their own social environment. However, the present students learn more about the Western-oriented curriculum and social media who colonized the minds of the generation in western oriented information and racist propaganda.

Students have to learn how peace is settled from the practical life of the *Sidama* society in Ethiopia, the dignity of Work from the *Gurage* society of Ethiopia and others from different cultural groups in the country. ‘Eddir’, Equib’ *Jige*’ and *‘Debo*’ are indigenous cooperation that makes Ethiopia Ethiopia. Ethiopianism is found in these indigenous institutions. The indigenous institutions are the root of principles of Ethiopianism. It is from the institutions that Ethiopianism comes into existence and make the country archetype on the international arena in the struggle against colonialism and injustice. “Many people believe the identification of Ethiopians to be the originators of the arts, sciences, technologies and political organizations” (O’Neil<https://debate.uvm.edu/dreadlibrary/oneill.html>).

*Ethiopians were the instructors of Music, founders of Arts, Science and Philosophy...The Ethiopians were the architects that laid the plans and measured the spaces and laid the foundations of the Pyramids of Egypt...and put the finishing touches on the Sphinx. (Quoted in post-1978:170 and Cited in Howe 1999: 73)*<sup>[4]</sup>.

Currently, there is a huge disappointment for nationalists in Ethiopia. The work of the predecessors who work in “Ethiopianness” which transcend ethnicity gradually deteriorated (Belachew 2009)<sup>[2]</sup>.

Ethiopia is the only state who successfully defeated a colonial power. Especially, the victory of Adwa played a significant role in initiating other African countries to struggle for their independence. However, this history of unity, patriotism, and other principles discussed degenerated towards ethnicity. Ethiopia is currently taken as examples of ethnic politics in Africa. It is the country in which different ethnic groups are fighting to have more land. Border dispute among ethnic groups is like a war between the neighbouring foreign country. Truly, this is what is created by few elites who sell their mind in the money politics of today’s world. It is not the interest of the majority of Ethiopians. However, due to few elite politicians, the mass is in difficulty or crises. There is social and political chaos in the country. What this generation did not take into consideration is that the present and future greatness depend on our past memories. There is no doubt that civilization started from where man originated. Ethiopia is recognized as being where the root of humanity is planted or in other words the origin of mankind. This is more proved because it is the homeland of (Lucy) *Australopithecus afarensis*, which is the oldest human remnant ever found in the Afar plain in the North –East part of Ethiopia not only that, but also an old fossil dating to about 4.5 million years has also been found in the same area (Gillespie 2003:10); It is true, indication for the world civilization evolved in this place. All

these evidence suggested that civilization began in Ethiopia, that is why Ethiopia is shown “in the Jamaican culture as a means to identify with a glorious, righteous, and perhaps the earliest of Human civilization” <https://debate.uvm.edu/dreadlibrary/oneill.html>). It is Ethiopians who provided coffee to the world, teff (a fine grain is used for making traditional food “Injera” (plain cakes) is predominantly grown and used in Ethiopia, yet it is started introducing in some part of the world. Ethiopianism is shown in the way they celebrate holidays and unique coffee ceremonies which are not found in another world.

Indigenization helps the young generation to know his/her predecessor’s history. However, the current education system of Ethiopia did not reflect truly Ethiopian history, culture, and social situations. The education curriculum is copied from the countries which Ethiopians defeated at the battle of Adwa’s, from those Ethiopia indirectly defeated by giving training, material and diplomatic support in the other parts of Africa. In Ethiopian education, history goes upside down. Education curriculum is copied from those who were not on the map of the world while civilization began in Ethiopia. Indigenization of the education system is becoming important within the context of the Ethiopian education system to build a strong, responsible generation who knows and protect his heritage. Indigenization requires return to The Ethiopian “self” which is found in the historical, literary, cultural and spiritual life of the Ethiopians. This entails the indigenization of the education system of the country and constitute the noble objectives of ethiopianism. As the history of Ethiopia became a model for many black countries, it has to be a life lesson for present Ethiopians. This is possible when we give respect for our past histories, heroes, and heroines.

## Conclusion

Indigenization is important for the restoration of Ethiopianism which is gradually deteriorating from time to time. This is possible when we incorporate indigenous knowledge of the country into existing school curriculum. The school curriculum has to teach Ethiopian history, culture and the various indigenous institutions and their importance. The root of Ethiopianism is found in the cultural, social, and political reality that the country passed for several decades. Ethiopians in addition to the struggle they made against colonialism and injustice they have indigenous knowledge in agriculture, forestry, medicine, handicrafts and so on. The indigenous knowledge, especially related to medicine is robbed by the west and used as their own inventions. Ethiopians indigenous language Ge’eez are now given at the Ph.D. level in some countries of the west. However, Ethiopians are forced to learn and communicate with foreign language. The Ethiopian indigenous democratic system is currently practiced in another world, but Ethiopians went back to ethnic conflict. For all these problems the indigenization of our systems, especially that of our education is vital. By indigenizing the school curriculum it is possible to produce an ideal citizen who appreciates his past history and aspire for the new invention instead of the undignified character of ethnic conflict which is the sign of backwardness. Indigenizing the curriculum help to produce students who are honest, respectful, approachable, cheerful, curious and to develop other positive characters.

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